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Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities

Institutionality

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## Proceduralism, Predisposing, Poesis: Forms of Institutionality, In the Making

Jodi Melamed

**ABSTRACT** Jodi Melamed reassesses the analytic of institutionality, which has largely been theorized as a dominant tool of the university in incorporating the emergent and muting the oppositional. In particular, Melamed identifies dominant discussions of institutionality that see global neoliberalism as a new, all-totalizing force. Instead, by reassessing the historical conditions of racial capitalism that make possible the 'global,' Melamed also excavates a genealogy of radical resistance that might allow us to rethink institutionality toward collective solidarity.

"How can any institution—a school, a corporation, an army, a police force, a prison—expect to continue along with business as usual after conceding that it is founded upon structural racism and colonial settlement?

And yes, who, exactly made you master?"

– Tavia Nyong'o, "The Student Demand"<sup>1</sup>

"The demand for the institutionalization of difference requires subjects that treat the administration as a matter of libido."

– Roderick Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*<sup>2</sup>

"We owe it to each other to falsify the institution, to make politics incorrect, to give the lie to our own determination."

– Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons*<sup>3</sup>

What does the act of framing 'institutionality' as a critical analytic make appear in the present conjuncture Tavia Nyong'o identifies as that of "the student demand"?<sup>4</sup> For Nyong'o the collective spirit of the many specific demands arising out of the surging activism of new black, queer, indigenous, undocumented, and pervasively intersectional student movements is captured by a free indirect paraphrase, a question directed ballistically at the administrative class, which presumes its authority to determine the practices and policies of the university: "Who the fuck made you master?"<sup>5</sup> In Nyong'o's rendering, the question conveys something like repulsion towards the institutional being of the university—specifically, its predisposed continuity exposed as structured by ongoing colonial modes of occupation and the continuance of everyday racialized dehumanization and exploitation, as well as racial killing and carceral regimes. The obscenity is that business as usual continues in and for the university despite its own acknowledgement that its conditions of possibility have been and remain slavery and its afterlives, and the eliminatory regimes of settler colonialism, past and present. How, the question implies, can that acknowledgement be fed into the machinery which articulates

discourse with practice in the university without wrecking that machinery or at least catalyzing its massive overhaul?

It remains to be seen what kinds of ruptures, antagonisms, and new arrangements will come out of this conjuncture, and what new solicitations the university will offer to its unruly students, what terms of incorporation and settlement. Yet for the purposes of this investigation, we might see the disgust in the continuity of the university—the fact that the institution can recognize its racial capitalist colonial conditions of possibility, renormalize itself without denying, forgetting, or restructuring those conditions, and simply continue—as registering a shift in the institutionality of the university, or rather, a shift in the dominant mode of institutionality at play broadly, in the university and beyond. I explore this as the *neoliberalization of institutionality*, or more precisely, as the *neoliberalization of liberal modes of institutionality*. If liberal modes of institutionality did their work, reproduced their subjects, discourses, and practices through a calculus of affirmation and exclusion which required a moralism or a moralized normative mode (that is, the codes of liberal political philosophy), if only to restrict, regulate, and differentially devalue on the basis of these moralized norms, neoliberalized institutionality operates as a ‘mere’ proceduralism, one that amplifies the administrative calculus and attenuates moral ideological legitimation and content.<sup>6</sup> The ascension of a neoliberalized mode of institutionality is also registered in the so-called ‘crisis in the humanities.’ This follows from the close constitutive relationship, in a weakening constellation, between ‘the humanities’ and liberal modes of institutionality, in which liberal modernity—a lived system of meanings and values centered in tropes of individualism, self-development, free will, civilization, the West, et.al.—appears to some to be reciprocally confirmed by the practices and discourses of the humanities, such as syllabi, course sequences, teaching philosophies, research methodologies, faculty governance, student self-reflection, etc.<sup>7</sup>

Institutionality, like hegemony for Raymond Williams and ideology for Althusser, “in practice...can never be singular.”<sup>8</sup> There are not one but many kinds of institutionalities, many kinds of formal and determinate linkages of rituals, discourse, subjects, and terms of relation predisposed to reproduction and incorporation. And from the point of view of living social process, the same “institution” or “institutional domain” (i.e., the Supreme Court or the legal institution) can be crossed by multiple and conflicting institutionalities. When this is disregarded, and institutionality is presumed to be always the same, we miss opportunities for disruptive activist intellectual work at the level where past social action congeals into present social structure.

Moreover, when contemporary scholarship examines the relationship between neoliberalism and governance, but overlooks the question of institutionality, two trends may be discerned: 1) there is an explicit or implicit call for the return of liberal modes of institutionality and/or 2) a totalizing concept of institutionality makes institutions appear less and less as sites of contradiction and horizons of social struggle. Indeed, the sense we get from many scholars is that neoliberalism has either weakened or fundamentally laid waste to classic forms of liberal institutional power, such as the state, the university, and the union, or that the operative logic of most institutions has been penetrated and totally reconfigured according to neoliberalism, understood as a form of normative reason, which extends economic measures to every dimension of human existence.

An example of the first, the call for a return to liberal modes, is Saskia Sassen’s work in *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*.<sup>9</sup> Here Sassen speaks not of institutionality, but of a global predatory assemblage of finance and debt which she describes as an epoch-making capacity and identifies by its central dynamic of expulsion: the expulsion of people from the economy, the expulsion of citizenship from territoriality through an expansive new global market in land, and the expulsion of polluted land and

water from the biosphere. For Sassen, what is remarkable about this predatory assemblage is that it yields astronomical gains for global investor classes regardless of the multiplicity of institutional forms it moves through; whether a country is autocratic, monarchic, or democratic, however its legal system is arranged, whatever its dominant culture or religion. The assemblage is, she says, conceptually subterranean because its destructive forces cut across our conceptual boundaries and evince a degree of complexity and intermediation that thwarts accountability for its brutality. She contrasts this new systemic logic of expulsion with a prior twentieth-century dynamic of state-led economic growth, which she describes as “driven by a logic of inclusion, by concerted efforts to bring the poor and the marginalized into the political and economic mainstream.”<sup>10</sup>

Although Sassen’s work is compelling in many respects, the newness and singularity of the dynamic of expulsion she highlights diminish when one considers financialization and debt today as always already configured and disposed by racial capitalism and imperial conquest. From this point of view, global assemblages of debt have not so much laid waste to liberal modes of institutionality, as they have amplified the brutal administrative proceduralism of differential devaluation, which always in practice determined the unequal outcomes of liberal modes of institutional power. Indeed, moving outside Sassen’s discipline, critical ethnic studies and indigenous critical theory have long reckoned with the systemic capacities of racialization, racial capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy to unify disparate institutional structures and determine extrainstitutional outcomes in ways that defy liberal concepts of separate spheres of institutional power. From this perspective ‘expulsion’ is not a new dynamic upending twentieth-century logics of ‘inclusion’ but internal and continuous to accumulation in political modernity.

Rather than seeing the brutality of today’s financialized modes of accumulation by dispossession as novel, we might ask, what are the key differences between indigenous lands seized yesterday by way of tax debt and sold to white settlers, and lands seized today by indebted governments and sold to foreign investors? Or, what are the differences between the dynamic of “trap economics and the asset stripping” of black communities since the 1970s, following Clyde Woods’s formulation, and today’s global “austerity trap,” which normalizes social suffering through the alibi of government debt and criminalizes workless classes?<sup>11</sup> Demonstrating a neoliberalization of liberal modes of institutionality, contemporary acts of dispossession appear to rely less on assimilation through citizenship than previous formations. In the first example, liberal notions of freedom and liberty (mobility) are marketized and deterritorialized, to weaken the signficatory bond between land as territoriality and state sovereignty, so that land may be converted into assets, enriching an unbordered global class of financial instrument holders. In the second example, “austerity” emerges as a revamped “civilizing” discourse, repeating the former’s repertoires of differential treatment, temporalizing, and devaluing —its “colonial divisions of humanity”—while replacing discourses of race and manifest destiny with discourses of debt-imposed triage and market determinism.<sup>12</sup>

We can consider the second trend in contemporary scholarship on neoliberalism and governance, which sees all institutions as submitting to the normative reason of financialization, by turning to Wendy Brown’s work in *Undoing the Demos* on the undoing of democratic political life by neoliberal reason.<sup>13</sup> For Brown, the rule of neoliberal rationality transforms persons from possessive individuals to financialized human capitals, who no longer can be ends in themselves, but must invest in themselves, attract investors, and enhance their credit rating, actually or figuratively. Correspondingly, the constituent elements of democracy—liberty, freedom, rights, and popular sovereignty—

are transposed from the political to the economic, such that liberty secures inequality, freedom as self rule transposes to comportment with market rationality, rights must conform with profit-seeking or be abated, and popular sovereignty has no meaning because the concept of governance is reduced to “regulation,” and made into the antithesis of neoliberalized liberty, freedom, and rights.

This is compelling political theory, but inequality rather than equality as the natural state of things—treating persons as capital, truncating freedom and social being to comport with accumulation.... Doesn't this describe the long arc of racial capitalist colonial modernity's shadow rationality? The unacknowledged evil twin of its liberal political manifest reason? From this point of view, we might describe the “undoing” Brown writes about as an “undoing” of the practices and *mise-en-scène* of democratic politics that confirmed the appearance of the reality of political democratic norms for felicitous (white) citizens. Under austerity regimes, US electoral politics and mainstream political processes take on the appearance, even for centered white nationals, of administrative relations of force without recourse; that is, they come to appear, at least structurally, closer to how processes always appeared in indigenous understandings of settler democracy and critiques of the US as a racial state. Under austerity, the practices that made electoral politics appear, to a financially secure white citizenry, as democracy in action—the public hearings, legislative debates, the party system, the horse trading—are diminished in their relevance to law-making. Austerity licenses “democracy” as a name for a technocracy legitimized by the imperative of debt reduction, which employs the budgetary process as law-making and thereby expels the *mise-en-scène* of electoral politics (legislative debates, public hearings, bids for state contracts, deliberation about how to run state institutions) from the effective political process.<sup>14</sup>

Instead of thinking that neoliberalism weakens institutional power in general or reduces all kinds of institutional reason to economic reason, I want to suggest that Sassen and Brown help us see the neoliberalization of liberal institutionalism; liberal institutions exceed their limits by incorporating, bringing to the surface, white-washing, and generalizing their shadow racial capitalist, colonial rationalities through the brutal neutrality of numeracy and a human capital model that is equal parts racialized social death and liberal freedoms. As white solidarity becomes a bar to capital accumulation, as local elites operating under the banner of nationalism form a barrier to financialization, neoliberal institutionalism overcomes these barriers by switching liberal modes of affirming and excluding to methods based on proceduralism, quantification, and abstraction. Where liberal multiculturalism has served as a pedagogy for affirming recognition and excluding redistribution, colorblindness functions pedagogically to teach compliance with proceduralism.

Where liberal institutionalism requires a moralism—a discourse of civilization, respectability, or rescue—to explain away the forms of structural inequality required for capital accumulation, neoliberal institutionalism just requires a *techné*, an administrative calculus that is not so much biopolitical, as biofinancialized, as connecting to the human to accrue capital through mere numeracy, virtualization, and technification.<sup>15</sup> This evacuation of moralism means that institutions appear less and less as sites of contradiction, or horizons of social struggle. The danger is that neoliberal institutionalism appears as “institutionalism” in a reified sense as mere administration, and in turn reifies institutionalism as automaticity, when, in fact, institutionalism—resolutions of material social process congealed into a relatively durable form—is open because it does not cease.<sup>16</sup>

Two important critical projects open up our thinking about institutionalism by surfacing its possibilities precisely as active, material social process out of which meaning is

assembled, subjects performatively constituted, and relays for collective experience precipitated. In different ways, Roderick Ferguson in *The Reorder of Things* and Stefano Harney and Fred Moten in *The Undercommons* (projects that very much live outside these books) interrogate institutionality through and beyond the university, surfacing its neoliberalization, and calling us away from the seductiveness and stultifications of its incorporative processes, its affirmations of minoritized difference for adaptive state-capital hegemonies (in the case of Ferguson) and its asocial critical professionalism (in the case of Harney and Moten).<sup>17</sup> Rewriting the question, “Who the fuck made you master?” along the lines of a (not unjoyful) repudiation, perhaps “Fuck No,” Ferguson and Harney and Moten confront the obscene reproduction of the university (which confirms its racial capitalist colonial conditions of existence then carries on as usual) with conceptual tools for imagining and prefiguring alter-institutionalities to support new kinds of people and collectivities.

In Roderick Ferguson’s *The Reorder of Things*, “the ‘academy’ names that mode of institutionality and power that delivers those marginalities [minority difference] over for institutional validation, certification, and legibility, bringing them into entirely new circumstances of valorization.”<sup>18</sup> Against the tendency to see economic forces as determining the university’s ethos and its knowledge products (as in Bill Readings’ work on the corporate university<sup>19</sup>), Ferguson demonstrates how the university, since taking on the function of producing and regulating meaning about racial difference in response to the student movements of the late 1960s, has served a pedagogical function for state and capital, teaching new modes of marketing, incorporating, commodifying, governing, and (de)valorizing minoritized subjects. For our purposes, we can track the growing neoliberalization of the institutionality of the university in Ferguson’s narrativization of the university as that institutionality which produces and regulates knowledge about minority difference.

For Ferguson, the university in the late 1960s and early 1970s responds to the radical demands of student movements coming out of third world liberation, Black and Brown Power, and anti-war and American Indian movements with selective affirmation. It affirms their calls for “freedom” and “self-determination” on registers that were productive for an adaptive hegemony (recognition, cultural affirmation, commodification, and diversity industries), and, at the same time, restricts the collective, oppositional, and redistributive aims of the student movement’s radical deployment of difference. In the first phase of this, power’s strategy of affirming/restricting plays out around the call for black and ethnic studies, affirming professionalization while restricting radical reorganizations of knowledge. Eventually, strategies of affirming/restricting come to be centered on “excellence” and “merit,” tropes that shift questions of inclusion from a historical and cultural register which locates subjects in concrete social locations, to issues of quantification and a reductive logic of calculability, reducing the dynamic character of ‘race’ posited by racial movement to a “fixed and discrete unit of calculation.”<sup>20</sup> This abstraction registers the start of a shift in the dominant institutionality of the university from a liberal to a neoliberal mode.

With the incorporation of queer sexuality into the expanding neoliberal administrative ethos of the university at the turn of the twenty-first-century, what Ferguson calls “a will to institutionality” is fully realized. According to Ferguson, “As power has negotiated and incorporated differences, it has also developed and deployed a calculus by which to determine the specific critical and ruptural capacities of those forms of differences. We may call this incorporation of modes of difference and the calculus that seeks to determine the properties and functions of those modes *as a will to institutionality*.”<sup>21</sup> With the incorporation of (queer) sexuality as an object of the administrative university,

we can mark a developed form of the will to institutionality that “requires that subjects treat the administration as a matter of libido.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, it selects and develops (the) subject/s of minority difference such that desire attaches to administration itself, that is, to proceduralism—the continuation and normalization of the university’s administrative ethos. As Nick Mitchell has recently noted about the university’s response to the new black student movements, every instance of crisis produced about race is taken up as a call for more and more administration.<sup>23</sup>

For Ferguson, the contemporary will to institutionality stultifies, making institutionalization “a historical necessity rather than one item on a menu of interventions” and “the standard of the evolved and developed critical subject.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, rather than calling for a romantic anti-institutionalism, Ferguson blends suspicion towards incorporation into dominant institutions “brokered in a time of affirmation” with a call for “an alternative currency,” “a black currency,” an alter-institutionality, whose practices and circulations are “more likely to protect and incite a dynamism around the meanings of minority culture and difference.”<sup>25</sup> Importantly, Ferguson neither prioritizes nor rejects the university as a site of struggle. In fact, his scholarship demonstrates how the focus on one institution as a discrete field of engagement (i.e. “the university”) is itself an effect of liberal modes of institutionality.

For our purposes, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, a performative event repeated with each reading, can be seen to work for a rupture of neoliberalized and liberal modes of institutionality. It works to undo and estrange their constitutive and constituting logics, their modes of individualizing, rationalizing, politicizing, critiquing, and formalizing social being into dominant ‘institutions’ and their ‘will to fix’ (apprehension of) the conditions of the material and the real. From the matrix of meaning the *Undercommons* creates, liberal and neoliberal modes of institutionality come into focus as continuous within a developing genealogy of unfreedom and truncations of social life, whose strategies include racial capitalist, settler colonial, and liberal democratic logics and practices alike. One description of the university’s institutionality captures this perfectly: “The University Is the Site of the Social Reproduction of Conquest Denial.”<sup>26</sup> Another description makes it clear that the university institutionalizes the same violence as the prison: “The university, then, is not the opposite of the prison, since they are both involved, in their way, with the reduction and command of the social individual.”<sup>27</sup> Thus for Moten and Harney, neo/liberal institutionality, generally considered, abhors social being outside its forms. Thus sociality itself (along the lines of what they call “consent not to be one”) is resistance.<sup>28</sup>

The performance of *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* is structured around the play of two categories of terms: 1) terms that distill the specific violences of neo/liberal modes of institutionality, which reduce and harm human capacities of sociality and continuously refresh the coloniality and raciality of institutional forms, and 2) terms that help us think and organize desire for forms of social being that are illiberally collective, unoccupied by professionalism, sociopoetical, in-the-making, and shared beyond the logics of democratic capitalist humanist Enlightenment traditions or critical moves that fall under the category of legitimation-by-reversal (i.e., the commons as reverse legitimation of privatization, redistribution as the reverse legitimation of dispossession, the critical professional as the reverse legitimation of the university as site of the social reproduction of conquest denial). While some of the terms in the first category incline towards a critique of liberal institutionality (‘politics’ and ‘critique’), many of them catch hold of a neoliberalization of institutionality, including ‘policy’ and ‘logistics.’

For Moten and Harney, capital today “wants control of the means [of social reproduction...] by gaining access to and directly controlling the informal experiment with

the social reproduction of life itself.”<sup>29</sup> In neoliberal times, this requires the use of directly political forms in addition to economic compulsion. ‘Policy’ is a name for the form political control and command takes. It is a deputized, dispersed form of command which controls social reproduction by diagnosing ‘incorrectness’ for those it represents to be in need of improvement, of change, of policy. Moten and Harney counterpose ‘planning’ to ‘policy.’ “Planning is self-sufficiency at the social level, and it reproduces in its experiment not just what it needs, life, but what it wants, life in difference, in the play of the general antagonism.”<sup>30</sup> It begins with “militant preservation” in the face of ‘policy.’<sup>31</sup> To escape the proceduralism of ‘policy,’ Moten and Harney offer the sociopoesis of the statement, “There’s *nothing wrong with us*.”<sup>32</sup> Similarly, ‘logistics’ is a name for the “capitalist science” of the moment, which “wants to dispense with the subject altogether,” to containerize “bodies, objects, affects, information” for circulation as capital, “as if it could reign sovereign over the informal, the concrete and generative indeterminacy of material life.”<sup>33</sup> To “logistics” Harney and Moten counterpose “hapticality, or love,” “the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you,” a capacity attached in sociopoetic imagination to the bodies of people captured in the hold of slave ships (the first form of logistical transportation).<sup>34</sup>

*The Undercommons*, in this way, repeatedly performs the defeat of neoliberal proceduralism by the sociopoetical imagination, asserting “the necessarily failed administrative accounting of the incalculable.”<sup>35</sup> In these performances, the concept of the ‘undercommons’ holds a special weight of desire and meaning, circulating as a term for “the nonplace of abolition,” a beneath and beyond of the university inhabited by maroons, castaways, and fugitives, and an “appositionality” of “being together in homelessness.”<sup>36</sup> How do the streams of meaning performatively attached to ‘the undercommons’ as a tool for sociopoesis frame or interact with the concept of ‘institutionality,’ as we’ve been discussing it here? In the interview that makes up the last chapter of text, in answer to a question about the relationship between the university and the undercommons, Harney states,

I don’t see the undercommons as having any necessary relationship to the university.... [T]he undercommons is a kind of comportment or on-going experiment with and as the *general antagonism*, a kind of way of being with others[. ]It’s almost impossible that it could be matched up with particular forms of institutional life. It would obviously be cut through in different kinds of ways and in different spaces and times.”<sup>37</sup>

As a “kind of comportment,” a way of being and doing, the undercommons is not in contradiction with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s dictum that there is no such thing as “a non-institutional environment.”<sup>38</sup> Rather, it’s a kind of practice that cannot be encompassed by “institutional life.” It may be thought of as the placeholder for a vision of sociality without institutionality, or perhaps the sociality that happens all the time beyond and below the incorporative maneuvers of dominant institutions. On the other hand, the ‘undercommons’ might be thought of in relation to institutionality as an excessive and ruptural sociality, a sociopoesis which demands that the active social content institutionality congeals returns to fluidity through a generative unthinking of the “hard materiality of the unreal.”<sup>39</sup>

My suggestion for thinking about pedagogy is to advocate for thinking and teaching that renews our sense of institutions as sites where the form and appearance of social being and collectivity is determined through social action and contest, even as we problematize institutions as always explicitly incorporative, as constituted out of the durable predispositions of adaptive hegemonies. Inspired by Ferguson and Harney and Moten, my call is perhaps to work for a disruptive institutionality, to work with the paradox of

institutionality—which pits congealed social process against lived presence—to plan for what Audre Lorde called “a new and more possible meeting,” for a broader sense of collective social being than neo/liberal forms of institutional power let us imagine and practice.<sup>40</sup> Infused with the disruptive potential of illiberal discourses of collectivity, “institutionality” can be made to line up anti-intuitively with critical rubrics that empower us to try to inhabit social being otherwise (undercommons, abolition, fugitivity), while reminding us that “radical change requires structure.”<sup>41</sup>

[Editors’ note: Responses to this piece by Leland Tabares (“[The Contexts of Critique: Para-Institutions & the Multiple Lives of Institutionality in the Neoliberal University](#)”) and Tanja Aho (“[Neoliberalism, Racial Capitalism, and Liberal Democracy: Challenging an Emergent Critical Analytic](#)”) are published in *Lateral* 6.1 (Spring 2017), with a [response by Melamed](#).]

## Notes

1. Tavia Nyong’o, “The Student Demand,” *Bully Bloggers*, November 17, 2015, accessed February 8, 2016, <http://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/author/afrofuturist/>. ↗
2. Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 223. ↗
3. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 20. ↗
4. Tavia Nyong’o, “The Student Demand.” ↗
5. Until recently, Yale’s residential college system employed the term “master” to designate the chief administrative officer, often a faculty member, for each of their twelve residential colleges. This colloquialism functioned as a trace of the dependence of Yale, and other US universities, on the wealth and labor of enslaved people and the dispossession and missionizing of American Indians. The term “master” was changed to “head of college” in April 2016. See Craig Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013). ↗
6. I thank Chandan Reddy for this insight and the use of the term “proceduralism” in this formulation. ↗
7. See Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); and George Lipsitz, “Ferguson as a Failure of the Humanities,” a lecture delivered at Princeton University on May 1, 2015, and archived at AAS21: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Archive of African American Studies at Princeton University. Accessed February 8, 2015, <http://aas.princeton.edu/publication/ferguson-as-a-failure-of-the-humanities/>. ↗
8. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 112. ↗
9. Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014). ↗
10. Sassen, *Expulsions*, 212. ↗
11. See Clyde Woods, “Les Misérables of New Orleans: Trap Economics and the Asset Stripping Blues, Part 1,” *American Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2009): 769-796. ↗
12. Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 18. ↗
13. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015). ↗
14. The best examples are on the state-level in Republican-dominated legislatures. In Wisconsin, the Omnibus Budget Bill (2015) was used to substitute budget-setting for policy-making. With minimal public disclosure about even the content of budget



and the addition of many last minute items, the budget process authorized, without normal political process, the deletion of tenure from state law, the firing of most of the scientists of the State's Department of Natural Resources, and changes to the state's open records law. When the budget item giving suburban legislators control over Milwaukee schools was criticized by Milwaukee parents and students as a take-over, business interests accused the parents of "inappropriate lobbying." With debt as their rationale, "austerity" state legislatures turn their attention chiefly to administrating dispossession, a negative biopolitical mode of governance suitable for contemporary constellations of financialization. See Erin Richards, "Public school backers step up push to roll back GOP measures," *Journal Sentinel*, June 10, 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/public-school-backers-step-up-push-to-roll-back-gop-measures-b99517267z1-306866841.html>.



15. I thank Chandan Reddy (again) for this insight and formulation.
16. I am adapting the concept of "material social process" from Raymond Williams, "Traditions, Institutions, Formations" in *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 119. It is noteworthy that in this chapter, Williams barely discusses institutions. What comes across instead is an idea of institutions as a kind of bridge between traditions and formations. Thus institutions, for Williams, would always already be a kind of institution effect, emerging from the more determinative interplay between traditions and formations within the context of hegemonic processes.
17. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*; Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*.
18. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*, 144.
19. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).
20. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*, 105.
21. *Ibid.*, 214.
22. *Ibid.*, 223.
23. Nicholas Mitchell, "The Force of Diversity: Risk, Privatization and the Salaita Affair" (presentation at the Annual Convention of the Modern Language Association, Austin, Texas, January 7-10, 2016).
24. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*, 226.
25. *Ibid.*, 226, 227, 232.
26. Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 41.
27. *Ibid.*, 42.
28. *Ibid.*, 97.
29. *Ibid.*, 75.
30. *Ibid.*, 76.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, 50, emphasis in original.
33. *Ibid.*, 87, 92.
34. *Ibid.*, 97, 98.
35. *Ibid.*, 51.
36. *Ibid.*, 42, 96.
37. *Ibid.*, 111, emphasis in original.
38. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), 5.
39. Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 24.
40. Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press Feminist Series, 2007), 123.

41. Bethany Bryson, *Making Multiculturalism: Boundaries and Meaning in U.S. English Departments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 186. [↗](#)

[Bio](#)



### Jodi Melamed

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